

Special Mention in the End-of-Degree Project Category

Courtyards of water and olive trees (Granada)

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The area

At the Alhambra Palace, Torre de Comares tower acts as a kind of Great Bear in a constellation of courtyards spread across the land that it safeguards. Delimiting and building round an empty space is an inherent part of the design of Granada's local residential buildings and its rural estates.

They form a star map that spreads across the whole of La Vega, in keeping with the *hortus conclusus* or enclosed garden so typical of local Mediterranean tradition and Granada's popular culture.

The irrigation channels of Cubillas have long been hidden under the waters of its reservoir. The arid terrain was transformed into crop-growing land and local fauna also took advantage of the new situation. Nonetheless, echoes still persist and the land still bears traces. The changed landscape has led to a complex ecosystem, where water, pinewoods, olive groves and shoreline vegetation intermingle, contaminating one another. The project takes into account this unusual situation. Indeed, taking advantage of the latter's latent potential, it stretches across the borderline of two elements of the landscape, framing pieces of land and water in the style of courtyards or windows onto this dramatic, anthropized yet fragile landscape.

The architecture

The project's shapes were inspired by the grid of old olive groves and its position in relation to traces of former elements on the plot. The two courtyards were built around two fragments of the setting, leading to a courtyard of water and a courtyard of olive trees. A decision was taken not to build outside the perimeter of the new courtyards in the belief that the natural surroundings and their preservation are dependent on our respect for and appreciation of them. Hence, round the empty space, successive activities were assigned to different spaces. The programme was consolidated within these limits, half a metre from the ground. Topographic conditions were taken into account in the project, subtly altering its rigid geometry through different features providing access to the site. These

intermediary features were adapted to fit in with the level and shape of the terrain, allowing visitors to gradually discover the project. The aim was for people to be able to wander round and soak in the area's past.

Thus the project was made up of two frame-like shapes raised above the ground, with three complementary features:

Platforms: Acting as infrastructure, able to withstand prolonged use. The aim is for them to remain there, offering versatile potential for activities over and above those of the current programme.

Pavilions: For the indoor activities and programme, box-like pods clad in ceramic tiles were erected on the platform. The idea is for them to represent jewels set in the landscape, acting as landmarks. They are recognizable as such thanks to the ceramic tiles, which reflect the sunlight filtering through the trees and the pergola, inspired by the moving light on the reservoir which they aspire to form part of. They are vantage points for contemplating the changing landscape and flora due to changes in weather and the seasons.

Pergolas: The aim was to create partial shade, like that of the trees, contrasting with the heavy shade cast on the ground by the platforms. They allow outdoor areas of the courtyards to be used, transforming them into pleasant settings during hot sunny times of year.